

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 SAJ-01 NIC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 COME-00 PC-04

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DRC-01 /183 W

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R 041154Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4323

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 4883

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NI, UR

SUBJECT: NIGERIAN REACTIONS TO GOWON VISIT TO USSR

REF: LAGOS 4763

SUMMARY: BOTH PRESS AND OFFICIAL MEMBERS OF GOWON  
ENTOURAGE IMPRESSED BY USSR DESPITE RESTRAINTS ON  
INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY AND BELIEVE NIGERIA HAS MUCH  
TO LEARN FROM SOVIETS. INFORMATION ON SUBSTANTIVE  
RESULTS OF TRIP REMAINS TIGHTLY HELD. END SUMMARY.

1. HOWEVER SUBSTANTIVE RESULTS DEVELOP, GOWON TRIP  
TO USSR HAS HAD IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF BOOSTING SOVIET  
IMAGE WITH FMG LEADERSHIP AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES  
WHO ACCOMPANIED GOWON TO MOSCOW. PRESS AND RADIO  
ACCOUNTS OF TRIP BY NIGERIAN JOURNALISTS RECOGNIZE  
LIMITATIONS ON INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS IMPOSED BY SOVIET  
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SYSTEM, BUT TEND TO ACCEPT THESE AS NOT UNFAIR PRICE

TO BE PAID FOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SPHERE. COMMENTATORS STRESS SUCH SPECIFICS AS MODERN ASPECT AND CLEANLINESS OF CITIES, READY AVAILABILITY OF FOODSTUFFS, AND FREE MEDICAL CARE AND INTANGIBLES LIKE DISCIPLINE AND PATRIOTISM OF RUSSIAN PEOPLE IN SINGING PRAISES OF USSR ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

2. THIS GENERALLY POSITIVE REACTION TO SOVIET EXPERIENCE SEEMINGLY SHARED BY OFFICIAL MEMBERS OF GOWON ENTOURAGE. SENIOR MEA OFFICIAL WHO WENT WITH HEAD OF STATE TOLD EMBOFF HE WAS VERY FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY WHAT HE SAW OF USSR, AND INDEED FOUND LITTLE OVERT EVIDENCE OF REPRESSIVE MECHANISMS HE HAD EXPECTED. SOURCE, WHO IS MOSLEM, WAS PARTICULARLY STRUCK BY EXISTENCE OF MOSQUES (NOTABLY IN IBILISI) AND FACT HE WAS ABLE ATTEND FRIDAY SERVICES IN LENINGRAD.

3. ALL WHO ACCOMPANIED GOWON RETURNED WITH CONVICTION THAT CLOSER FMG-SOVIET TIES CAN BE BENEFICIAL TO NIGERIA. JOURNALISTS HAVE EMPHASIZED THAT THEY DO NOT BELIEVE SOVIET SYSTEM OR IDEOLOGY CAN SERVE AS NIGERIAN MODEL, BUT RATHER THAT SOVIETS CAN OFFER VALUABLE TECHNOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE AND THAT NIGERIANS CAN HOPEFULLY LEARN FROM SOVIETS SENSE OF PATRIOTISM AND DISCIPLINE. PRESS HAS STRESSED (AS DID GOWON HIMSELF--REFTEL) THAT FMG IS NOT SEEKING SOVIET AID BUT INTENDS TO PAY IN FULL FOR SERVICES RECEIVED.

4. NEITHER PRESS ACCOUNTS NOR OUR OFFICIAL SOURCE HAVE OFFERED ANY FURTHER INSIGHTS INTO SUBSTANTIVE CONTENT OF GOWON TALKS WITH SOVIET LEADERSHIP. MEA OFFICIAL CONFIRMED THAT GOWON HELD TALKS WITH PODGORNYY, KOSYGIN, AND BREZHNEV AND THAT LAST-NAMED WAS CLEARLY PRINCIPAL SPOKESMAN ON SOVIET SIDE, BUT PROVIDED NO INFORMATION ON SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

5. COMMENT: SOVIETS CLEARLY GAINED CONSIDERABLE  
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IMMEDIATE BENEFIT FROM GOWON TRIP TO USSR IN TERMS OF BOOST TO PRESTIGE WHICH HAD BEEN SAGGING SINCE HIGH POINT AT END OF CIVIL WAR. OF GREATEST POTENTIAL IMPORTANCE IS FACT NIGERIAN VISITORS CAME AWAY HIGHLY IMPRESSED BY LEVEL OF SOVIET DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITIES, AREA IN WHICH DEVELOPED WESTERN NATIONS TRADITIONALLY ASSUMED HERE TO BE WITHOUT PEERS. EXTENT TO WHICH

SOVIETS CAN CONSOLIDATE GAINS STEMMING FROM GOWON  
TRIP WILL NOW DEPEND ON THEIR ABILITY TO DELIVER  
SUCCESSFULLY ON IRON AND STEEL COMPLEX AND OTHER  
TECHNOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS SUGGESTED IN  
COMMUNIQUE REPORTED REFTEL.  
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